DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 194 908 CS 205 994

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TITLE The COMP-LAB Project: Assessing the Effectiveness of a Laboratory-Centered Basic Writing Course on the College Level. Final Report, September 1, 1977 through August 31, 1979.
INSTITUTION City Univ. of New York, Jamaica, N.Y. York Coll.
SPONS AGENCY City Univ. of New York Research Foundation, N.Y.; Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 79
GRANT G007701130
NOTE 51p.; For related document see CS 205 995. Colored pages marginally legible.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Programs; Communication Problems; *Experimental Programs; Higher Education; *Learning Laboratories; *Program Evaluation; *Remedial Programs; Writing (Composition); *Writing Instruction; Writing Processes; *Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS City University of New York York College; COMP LAB Course; *Writing Laboratories

ABSTRACT

The COMP-LAB, a CUNY-based writing course combining classroom instruction with an autotutorial writing laboratory for students deficient in standard written English, is described and evaluated in this assessment. The background and purpose of the project are discussed in the first two sections, prior to an extensive description of the project itself in the third section. The fourth section of the report focuses on the outcomes and impacts of the project at its original site and at two transfer sites; and the need for implementing such a successful program in other institutions is stressed in the conclusion. (HTH)

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Grantee Organization
York College, jointly with
The Research Foundation of CUNY
Jamaica, NY 11451
Grant No. G007701130

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Project Dates
Starting Date: 1 September 1977
Ending Date: 31 August 1979
Number of Months: 24

Grant Award
Year 1: $116,710
Year 2: 71,813
Total: $188,523

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The COMP-LAB Project: Assessing the Effectiveness of a Laboratory-Centered Basic Writing Course on the College Level

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The COMP-LAB Project: Assessing the Effectiveness of a Laboratory-Centered Basic Writing Course on the College Level

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A. Project Overview

In Fall 1977, York College, CUNY (an urban, four-year public college, with a largely disadvantaged student body), received a two-year grant of $188,523 from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to develop a basic writing course which would integrate classroom instruction in composing with work on editing for correctness in an autotutorial writing laboratory (known as the COMP-LAB). An additional grant of $34,572 from the Exxon Education Foundation supported an evaluation of the course by Formative Evaluation Research Associates, Inc., of Ann Arbor, during the Fall 1978 semester. The experimental course was found to be at least as effective as (and in some ways more effective than) the traditional course in helping students to improve their writing and to pass the course, despite a reduction of up to 60% in teacher contact time for experimental students. The course has been transferred to two other colleges; aspects of the course have been adopted at four more. A project is now underway (with additional support from the Fund) to develop new models of the course for various non-college settings (high schools, social service agencies, unions, and businesses).

B. Purpose

The crisis in students' writing skills is by now a well-known story. Increasing numbers of nontraditional students with severe writing problems (often attributed to interference from nonstandard or foreign-language speech) are entering college, and a better way to help them improve their writing skills is needed. It has not been sufficiently recognized that such students are not just correcting their writing, but are actually acquiring a new language system, standard written English. Repetitive and incremental practice is required for such language acquisition. Laboratories are a likely alternative to classrooms for providing this practice, but too often writing laboratories simply replace teacher time with (often inferior) tutor time, and have been unable in any case to offer anything but unsystematic, ineffective, and often boring materials. It was the purpose of this project to integrate effective laboratory work with classroom instruction, to produce a basic writing course which would be more efficient than the traditional one.

C. Background and Origins

By 1975, English 100 at York had been carefully defined as a remedial course designed to provide students with instruction in basic written word and sentence correctness, and in elementary rhetoric. Attention could then be turned to improving the efficiency of delivering the instruction. Beginning in Spring 1976, Epes, Kirkpatrick, and Southwell began creating exercises and supplementary audiotapes to teach grammar in a primitive laboratory setting. The FIPSE funding, for two years beginning in the Fall 1977 semester, enabled the development of an English 100 course which systematically integrates classroom instruction with the work in the autotutorial writing laboratory.

D. Project Description

In the COMP-LAB course, classroom instruction consists of work on elementary rhetoric and syntax. In the laboratory, audiotapes and exercises bring together a variety of recent and sophisticated language-teaching techniques, to provide students with an opportunity for learning the forms of standard written English, and with extensive practice in using them in sentence and paragraph contexts. The materials are almost completely self-teaching: they are structured incrementally (so that each builds on what has come before, and prepares for what will follow), and even the most complex exercises have invariant answers. Students can thus work efficiently in the COMP-LAB on problems of correctness; they can work through the exercises, and check their work, without assistance from their teachers. Because they are able to work independently, they can work at their own speed, in a climate of positive reinforcement rather than negative feedback; the burden for learning is thus placed where it properly belongs, on the students themselves. Additionally, the teacher is freed from the necessity of constant repetition of elementary grammatical material, and thus can spend more time on instruction in composing. The diversion of what would have been classroom work to a laboratory setting permits a reduction in classroom contact hours, with the potential for producing savings in instructional costs.

The first year of the project was conceived of as a formative one, and involved such activities as furnishing the laboratory, hiring personnel, completing production of the exercises and audiotapes, establishing a syllabus and administrative procedures, testing the course's transferability to other teachers, and pilot-testing evaluation procedures.

By the second year of the project, evaluation and transfer could begin. The entire coordinated course was transferred to Metropolitan Community College in Minneapolis, and to South Central Community College in New Haven. The Exxon funding permitted a careful and comprehensive evaluation of the experimental course at all three sites by an external evaluator who was unconnected with

the development of the project. Using a conventional comparison-group research design, FERA collected and analyzed data about attitudes of both students and teachers, student writings (both holistically and using an error-count measure), demographic information, and administrative concerns. It was found that there were virtually no differences between the two groups of students in attitudes toward their courses and toward writing in general, and that COMP-LAB students had no unfavorable attitudes toward the laboratory practice. Further, they succeeded to a greater extent than control students in improving their error rates, and this improvement was accompanied by an improvement (markedly greater than that shown by control students) in the overall quality of their writing. Experimental and control students passed their courses at equivalent rates, despite a reduction of up to 60% in teacher contact time for experimental students. All this suggests that the COMP-LAB course is efficient at improving students' writing, and that it can be transferred without particular difficulty.

E. Outcomes and Impacts

By all measures, this project has been successful. The course has been shown to improve student writing. It has been institutionalized at York and the two transfer sites; aspects of the course have been adopted at four additional colleges. More than 800 students have taken the model COMP-LAB course. Twelve reports about the project have been produced. The Directors have made a total of 30 presentations about the project or aspects of it. Over 100 visits and inquiries about the project have been received; an information packet has been developed to respond to such inquiries. The materials used by students in the COMP-LAB are being published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., as The COMP-LAB Exercises, so that instructors in traditional classrooms may benefit from the project. Interest in the course, in the autotutorial laboratory, and in the exercises themselves remains at a high level. Additional sites are already planning to adopt the course, as the exercises gain a wider audience. The new funding from FIPSE, to adapt the COMP-LAB course to non-college settings, provides another opportunity for others to benefit from what has been learned.

F. Summary and Conclusions

As more nontraditional students with severe writing problems enter college, more colleges will be looking for writing programs which can meet these students' needs. It is therefore important that a tested, flexible, and cost-effective program like the COMP-LAB basic writing course is available to such institutions (and the need is equally great outside college settings).

The COMP-LAB Project: Assessing the Effectiveness of a Laboratory-Centered Basic Writing Course on the College Level

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1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

In Fall 1977, York College, CUNY (an urban, four-year public college, with a largely disadvantaged student body), received a two-year grant of $188,523 from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to develop a basic writing course which would integrate classroom instruction in composing with work on editing for correctness in an autotutorial writing laboratory (known as the COMP-LAB). The project was administered by Professors Mary Epes, Carolyn Kirkpatrick, and Michael Southwell. An additional grant of $34,572 from the Exxon Education Foundation supported an evaluation of the course, which was carried out by Formative Evaluation Research Associates, Inc., of Ann Arbor, during the Fall 1978 semester. The experimental course was found to be at least as effective as (and in some ways more effective than) the traditional course in helping students to improve their writing and to pass the course, despite a reduction of up to 60% in teacher contact time for experimental students. As of the writing of this report, the course has been transferred to two

other colleges, and aspects of the course have been adopted at four more (listed in Appendix A). Names of participants in the project are contained in Appendix B.

A project is now underway (with additional support from the Fund) to develop new models of the course for various non-college settings (high schools, social service agencies, unions, and businesses).

2. PURPOSE

The crisis in students' writing skills is by now a well-known story. Increasing numbers of nontraditional students with severe writing problems (often attributed to interference from nonstandard or foreign-language speech) are entering college, and a better way to help them improve their writing skills is needed. It has not been sufficiently recognized that such students are not just correcting their writing, but are actually acquiring a new language system, standard written English. Repetitive and incremental practice is required for such language acquisition. Laboratories are a likely alternative to classrooms for providing this practice, but too often writing laboratories simply replace teacher time with (often inferior) tutor time, and have been unable in any case to offer anything but unsystematic, ineffective, and often boring materials. It was the purpose of this project to integrate effective laboratory work with classroom instruction, to produce a basic writing course which would be more effective than the traditional one.

3. BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS

In 1975, Professors Epes, Kirkpatrick, and Southwell began working together on a departmental committee to define the instructional goals of English 100 at York, a remedial course concentrating on instruction in basic written word and sentence correctness, and in elementary rhetoric. Criteria were established for passing the course, and a departmental final examination was instituted. There was thus general department-wide uniformity in the content of the course, and our attention could be turned to improving the efficiency of delivering the instruction.

During the Spring 1976 semester, Epes began experimenting with individualizing instruction in English 100, supplementing whole-class instruction by setting up tape recorders in a corner of her classroom and assigning grammar audiotapes to her students. During the Fall 1976 semester she was joined by Kirkpatrick and Southwell, and all three teachers collaborated in beginning to revise the audiotapes, and to write accompanying exercises which could be done autotutorially (that is, which could be done and corrected by the students themselves, without their teachers' help). During the Spring 1977 semester an unused classroom was converted into a primitive laboratory, and all three teachers assigned students to use this lab as an alternative to portions of the classroom instruction; in the meantime, development of the exercises and audiotapes continued. The FIPSE funding, for two

years beginning in the Fall 1977 semester, enabled us to develop an English 100 course which systematically integrates carefully-defined classroom instruction with the work in the autotutorial writing laboratory.

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In the COMP-LAB course, classroom instruction consists of work on elementary rhetoric and on syntax (as described beginning on page 6). In the laboratory, audiotapes and exercises bring together a variety of recent and sophisticated language-teaching techniques, to provide students with an opportunity for learning the forms of standard written English and with extensive practice in using them in sentence and paragraph contexts. The materials are almost completely self-teaching: they are structured incrementally (so that each builds on what has come before, and prepares for what will follow), and even the most complex exercises have invariant answers. Students can thus work efficiently in the COMP-LAB on problems of correctness; they can work through the exercises, and check their work, without assistance from their teachers. Because they are able to work independently, they can work at their own speed, in a climate of positive reinforcement rather than negative feedback; the burden for learning is thus placed where it properly belongs, on the students themselves. Additionally, the teacher is freed from the necessity of constant repetition of elementary grammatical material. The div-

ersion of what would have been classroom work to a laboratory setting permits a reduction in classroom contact hours, with the potential for producing savings in instructional costs.

The first year of the project was conceived of as a formative one. The following activities took place:

1. The laboratory was furnished, and supervisory personnel were hired.
2. Writing of 13 modules of exercises was finished.
3. Audiotapes to accompany the exercises were produced.
4. A syllabus was created to coordinate classroom and lab work.
5. Record- and time-keeping procedures were developed.
6. The transferability of the course was tested, by hiring three adjunct teachers for additional sections of the course, developing procedures for training them to teach the course, and studying their reactions and experiences.
7. Using data from attitudinal questionnaires, from the experiences of the three adjunct teachers, and from a participant-observation study (carried out by a graduate student from another institution), exercises and procedures were refined.
8. Plans for evaluating the course were pilot-tested.
9. Arrangements were made for transferring the course to Metropolitan Community College in Minneapolis, and to South Central Community College in New Haven.
10. Information about the project was disseminated, by presentations at professional conferences, written reports, and responses to inquiries.

By the second year of the project, evaluation and transfer could begin. The Exxon funding permitted a careful and comprehensive evaluation of the experimental course at all three sites by an external evaluator who was unconnected with the development

of the project. Such an evaluation would be more persuasive than any we could produce ourselves.

4.1 CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Classroom instruction includes the following subjects and activities:

1. writing fluency. Free writing is the most important technique used to develop students' fluency in writing. For the first third of the semester, free writing is done every day in class. Students write without stopping to censor their ideas, for correctness or for anything else. Since free writing is never collected by the teacher, students learn not to be afraid of writing down their ideas. Later in the semester, they learn to use free writing to generate ideas for their papers.

2. speech/writing differences. Errors in papers are analyzed, to help students understand how speech habits affect writing.

3. syntax. The following subjects are dealt with: verb identification in sentences; the structure of sentences; verb and noun expansion (that is, modification), using both phrases and clauses; errors in sentence structure.

4. composing and editing. Students are taught to see composing and editing for correctness as separate, sequential steps in the writing process. Systematic instruction is provided in both composing techniques and editing techniques.

5. introductory rhetoric. Student papers are analyzed for: presentation of a specific main point; ability to focus on that single main point; adequate development of the main point. (At York, more advanced aspects of rhetoric are covered in the next courses in the Freshman English sequence.)

6. paper correction. Students work on procedures for correcting mistakes in their papers. These procedures make students aware of their own patterns of error, and help them to understand the reasons for their mistakes; this increases their chances of avoiding making the same mistakes on their next papers.

7. course management. Time is devoted to making sure that students become completely familiar with all the standard forms, procedures, and reports which are required in a course so tightly-structured.

English 100 at York College had originally contained five class hours; the class hours in the courses at Metropolitan and South Central were four and three respectively. For the period of the experiment, these hours were reduced to two at all three sites, in an attempt to make the course as cost-efficient as possible, by substituting relatively inexpensive laboratory time for expensive classroom time. For the future, we plan not to reduce the number of class hours so drastically. The experiment has demonstrated that students in the COMP-LAB course can perform as well as students in traditional classroom sections of English 100, despite a reduction in their classroom time, but an increase in class hours from two to three or four might permit a greater improvement in their performance. During 1979-80 at York, in fact, class hours in COMP-LAB sections of English 100 are only being reduced to four.

4.2 LABORATORY WORK

The exercises, now in their sixth complete revision, are organized into the following 12 modules:

Module 1: Writing Conventions (basic conventions of manuscript form; introduction to the laboratory system)
Module 2: Wrong Words (commonly confused homonyms, and form-class errors)
Module 3: Noun Plural Forms
Module 4: Verb Agreement (in the present tense)
Module 5: The Verb BE (in the present and past tenses)
Module 6: Past-tense Verb Forms

Module 7: Sentence Construction (base sentences; verb and noun expansion; avoiding fragments)
Module 8: Verb Phrases with HAVE
Module 9: Verb Phrases with BE (active and passive)
Module 10: Other Verb Phrases (with DO and modals)
Module 11: Sentence Combining
Module 12: More about Sentence Construction (avoiding fragments and run-ons)

The following shorter supplementary modules are available for students who need them:

Module 13: Noun Possessive Forms
Module 14: Pronoun Forms
Module 15: Pronoun Reference
Module 16: Adjective and Adverb Forms
Module 17: Adjective and Adverb Comparison
Module 18: Negative Words

A typical module consists of the following parts:

1. an audiotape introduction to the content of the module, supplemented by short and simple exercises in which students practice applying the rules in obvious contexts;

2. fill-in exercises, which check students' understanding of the rules;

3. sentence manipulation exercises, which ask students to use the forms in sentence contexts;

4. paragraph manipulation (controlled composition) exercises, which ask students to use the forms in whole-paragraph contexts;

5. proofreading exercises, which check students' recognition of both correct and incorrect forms;

6. a Writing Test, which checks students' use of the forms in their own freely-created writing. This is the only exercise which students cannot check by themselves, and provides the teacher with clear and unambiguous information about how well students can control the forms in their own writing.

At York, the laboratory consists of two rooms, one with carrels and listening stations, and the other with tables. Two lab supervisors work staggered hours to permit the laboratory to be

open all day and into the evening. (It has not yet proved possible to keep the laboratory open on weekends, although there is sufficient demand to make it worthwhile if it can be accomplished.) Student aides provide approximately 50 hours of assistance per week. The lab supervisors are competent to provide tutorial assistance to any student who may require it, though students tend to need reassurance rather than help. Students are assigned one module a week.

Laboratory procedures are as follows: An open file is maintained for each student, in which work-in-progress is kept. At the beginning and end of each session of work on the exercises, students punch in and out on a time clock; this permits us to keep track of how much time students spend working on the exercises. An instruction sheet guides students through each module, telling them what to do, step by step (like whether to go on to the next exercise, or to review and repeat an exercise). It also provides a place for students to record their scores on the various exercises.

The practice exercises in the RULES section of each module are stapled into a packet along with the relevant answers; students listen to the audiotape and at the same time do (and check) the exercises in this packet, at the beginning of each module. The longer exercises in the EXERCISES section of each module are printed on single sheets, and handed out one-by-one when students are ready for them. After completing an individual exercise, students are given a packet of answers for the module, and check

their work on that exercise. They then return the answers, and go on to get, do, and check the next exercise in sequence. The last exercise in each module is the Writing Test, which students cannot check by themselves. Upon finishing the Writing Test, students hand it in along with their entire package of exercises.

The exercises are spot-checked by the lab supervisors for accuracy in scoring, and then are returned to the students. The Writing Test is passed on to the teacher for marking. A Weekly Report provides students each week with information from both the lab supervisor and the teacher on their work for the week; it records how often they were in the lab, how much time they spent there, whether they finished the assigned module, how careful their scoring was, how many times they were absent from class, how well they did on their Writing Test, and what work is overdue (if any).

This laboratory system is a powerful one. For students with relatively weak reading skills, and with a cognitive style which makes them inefficient at applying abstract information to particular cases, the audiotaped introduction to the feature of the module is more effective and more dignified than a written introduction. In the privacy of carrels, students can listen as slowly as they need to and can review whenever necessary; they thus avoid embarrassment, and they never have to feel that they are lagging behind (or holding back) faster-moving students. The single-sheet exercise format makes it possible for us to prevent students from going on until they have checked (and understood)

their previous work. The reporting system helps both students and teacher to keep track of what has been done and what hasn't; it also serves as a constant reminder of the students' responsibility for their own work.

The laboratory has proved useful in other ways as well. It provides a site for supervised and timed writing of papers, thus freeing the teacher from giving up class time for this purpose. After the first third of the semester, lab supervisors check required free writing (which is at this point no longer customarily being done in class). And the lab provides assistance to drop-in students who are not in English 100 but wish to spend time working on grammatical problems in their writing; procedures have been set up to facilitate this use of the laboratory.

4.3 CLASSROOM/LABORATORY COORDINATION

In a course where activities are carried out in entirely different locations, coordination of these activities is particularly important. A syllabus has been devised that carefully synchronizes classroom instruction with laboratory assignments. Paper assignments have been designed to check students' learning in the laboratory. Finally, a system of marking papers has been established which holds students responsible for errors only in features already studied in the laboratory.

5. OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

5.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMP-LAB COURSE

A thorough discussion of the evaluation of the COMP-LAB project is contained in the Final Report prepared for the Exxon Education Foundation. A conventional comparison-group research design was set up, to permit comparing the performance of COMP-LAB students with that of control students (in sections taught using traditional methods in the classroom), at York and at the two transfer sites, Metropolitan and South Central. A summary of the findings follows.

5.1.1 Students' Attitudes Toward Writing

There were virtually no differences in attitudes of the two groups of students, either toward their courses, or toward writing in general. The traditional course (taught in the classroom) and the COMP-LAB course (taught using the autotutorial writing laboratory) were equally successful in fostering favorable attitudes (insofar as such expressed responses can be trusted).

5.1.2 Feelings about the COMP-LAB Course

The COMP-LAB course is a highly-structured one, with a demanding syllabus which does not give students much freedom; it clearly and directly emphasizes the correction of errors in student writing. Student attitudes toward the course show that COMP-LAB students are not deterred or troubled by this emphasis. These students overwhelmingly enjoyed their lab work, and consid-

ered it helpful. There therefore seems to be no reason to worry that the course's unabashed emphasis on correction of errors presents any problems to COMP-LAB students.

One would expect those who developed the course to be enthusiastic about it; but teachers at the transfer sites also expressed no difficulty in teaching the course, and a high level of satisfaction with it. It appears, then, that teachers who are accustomed to the classroom, and who have no personal stake in the success of the lab-centered course, do come to see it as workable and effective. The Final Report on the evaluation contains statements from still other teachers of the course (or users of the exercises) documenting its effectiveness in a variety of settings.

Although administrators were reluctant to express any attitudes toward the course prior to receiving the evaluation findings, it is revealing to note that the course has become a permanent part of the curriculum at all three sites. One suspects that this would not have happened if there had been serious administrative objections to it. Certainly an important factor in this decision has been the flexible scheduling which the course's reduced classroom hours permit. Probably the educational value of the course has had some effect as well. Another factor might have been the costs of the course (see the discussion beginning on page 18).

Worry about whether students and teachers other than those at York can use the course would therefore seem to be unfounded.

5.1.3 Error Rates

Analysis of student writings was subcontracted by FERA to the Educational Testing Service. An analysis of counts of six variables (words per paper, verb errors per verb, sentence errors per verb, spelling errors per word, other errors per word, and total errors per word) showed that the two groups of students were equivalent at the beginning of the semester; that both experimental and control students improved over the course of the semester in all six variables; and that experimental students were better than control students in three out of the six variables at the end of the semester. Further, confidence levels that the experimental students' improvement actually occurred are much higher.

These findings strongly suggest that the COMP-LAB course is effective in improving error rates. But there are reasons for caution in concluding that it is superior to the traditional course in this respect. An analysis of error counts by the ETS raters on a sample of papers (using counts by the Directors as a norm) showed acceptable reliability in totals, but occasional low reliability in counts of individual errors, in both better and less good papers. This makes it difficult to be completely confident about the relative merits of the two kinds of instruction, in regard to improved error rates.

5.1.4 Holistic Scores

A holistic analysis of papers at York was undertaken, to see whether the experimental students' improvement in error rates had

been gained at the expense of the overall quality of their writing. If so, there would be serious question about the value of a curriculum producing results like these. FERA's analysis of holistic scores (for experimental and control students at York College only) shows that this is not the case. Experimental students began at a lower overall level of quality than control students (though the difference was not statistically significant). This difference may be accounted for by the nature of the experimental population at York (which included a large proportion of students in the SEEK program, for educationally deprived students). Nevertheless, by the end of the semester, experimental students were writing at a higher overall level of quality than control students (though again the difference is not statistically significant). Even more important, experimental students realized significant improvement in overall quality, while control students did not.

The discrepancy in improvement in holistic scores between experimental and control students is even more striking when only failing students are considered. Although the students in this group did not succeed in passing the course, the experimental students did make statistically significant improvement in the overall quality of their writing, while control students once again did not. This suggests that the COMP-LAB course has particular benefits for students whose writing level is low when they enter the course.

Concern about the possible negative impact of correctness instruction on overall writing quality, then, appears (from these results) to be without foundation. Improvement in error rates for experimental students was accompanied not by a decline or (as for control students) by no significant change, but by an improvement in overall quality. It might be that, as COMP-LAB students felt themselves gaining control over the correctness of their writing, they became more confident about the content of their writing as well, and more ambitious. These findings suggest that it is false to view writing correctness as a trivial matter of mere surface features. Lack of control over correctness may induce avoidance strategies, and may mask rhetorical capability. It can even inhibit rhetorical growth.

5.1.5 Pass Rates

There are no significant differences in pass rates between experimental and control students, overall or at any of the three sites. It is interesting to note that experimental students' improvement in error rates and overall quality was not reflected in higher pass rates. This may be due to the established grading tendencies of the experimental teachers at York, and to staffing difficulties at one of the transfer sites (or perhaps to some factor not yet recognized).

5.1.6 Other Benefits

In summary, then, the COMP-LAB course seems to offer an effective alternative to traditional classroom instruction. It does improve students' writing, and it does not offer any particular difficulties to either students or teachers. The course may offer additional benefits to students, as well. Fairly large percentages of experimental students reported that the COMP-LAB course had helped them to learn better study habits. Additional research would be required to determine whether the course actually produces better results in other classes. But it is true that the COMP-LAB course had from the beginning been designed in part to help students learn not just how to write more correctly but also how to learn more efficiently. It seems likely that for many of these educationally disadvantaged students the assigned laboratory work (equivalent to a kind of supervised homework) is their first exposure to the fact that in college (unlike high school) it is necessary to do substantial amounts of work outside the classroom. A lesson like this may be even more important for students' future success in college than improvement in writing ability.

There has been considerable discussion about the effect of students' self-concept on their achievement. According to one theory, improving students' self-image is the best way to help them to achieve scholastically. It has recently been argued, on the other hand, that helping students to achieve is actually the most effective way of improving their self-concept. The COMP-LAB

project may provide support for this theory. The course puts students into a highly-structured environment with very little freedom, but with a clear and systematic approach to frequently-measured goals. It seems likely that some of the success of the course can be attributed to this support system. The evaluation contained no direct examination of students' self-concept, but this is an important area for future research.

A longer-range study of the effects of the COMP-LAB course on retention of students in college, and on grade point averages, might reveal other as yet unknown benefits of the COMP-LAB course. Preliminary planning is now underway for such a study.

5.2 COSTS

The COMP-LAB course saves instructional costs by replacing some expensive classroom time with relatively inexpensive laboratory time. An analysis of the direct costs of the course at York during the Fall 1978 semester shows that replacement of the traditional 5-hour classroom format by a 2-hour COMP-LAB format for six sections of English 100 effected a savings of approximately $7,500, or about 20% of the expected cost. It should be noted that the COMP-LAB students' 60% reduction in teacher contact time did not come at the expense of the quality of the education provided to them, as measured by pass rates, error rates, and holistic scores on writings.

But so drastic a reduction in classroom time was never intended as more than an experiment. For teachers whose course

load typically consists of 12 teaching hours, to award only two hours' credit for one section of English 100 would make the burden of teaching the course quite impossible. A more realistic view of direct expenses associated with the COMP-LAB course can be gained by analyzing costs of teaching 21 sections of English 100 on a 4-hour COMP-LAB format at York in 1979-80. These figures show that replacement of the traditional format by the COMP-LAB format at York in 1979-80 has incurred an additional cost of well under $1,000, or less than 1%. Increasing the number of sections by one (to 22) would have saved more than enough money to make up completely for the additional cost of the lab personnel. And the value of services provided to drop-in students who are not taking English 100 has not been considered in these calculations.

It remains to be seen what effect on student learning the increase in contact time from two hours to four will have; one would expect the effect to be positive. If so, this advantage might be considered worth any slight additional expense.

5.3 TRANSFERABILITY

The COMP-LAB course had been designed from the very beginning to be transferable; if it were able to be used only at York, it would be much less valuable than if it were available to other colleges with similar needs. A breakdown of the evaluation results by sites shows no significant differences among the sites. Despite administrative difficulties at both sites (mild at one,

but severe at the other), the course was taught, its students did learn, and both students and teachers expressed considerable satisfaction with it. Administrators perceived the course as successful enough that, even before any results from the evaluation could become known, other sections began using the COMP-LAB model. These are truly important results, for they show that the course can be instituted at other colleges with a minimum of preparation, and that it can then be expected to function efficiently.

There was, however, one important difference between the two transfer sites, and this difference was reflected in the evaluation results. At Metropolitan, there was a stable and experienced faculty, with an administration committed to improving the college's offerings. South Central, on the other hand, was in the midst of a period of transition, from an evening college for part-time students to a college for full-time students. Associated with this transition had been considerable administrative and faculty turnover. Because of this difference, staffing crises at both sites at the beginning of the evaluation semester had very different effects on the course. At Metropolitan, the original teacher became ill shortly before the beginning of classes, but the lab supervisor was able to take over the teaching duties with little real difficulty. At South Central, however, the original teacher was replaced in the third week of classes by other teachers, to whom it was impossible to give complete training in teaching the course. Difficulties in getting

the lab materials printed did little to help the experimental course to run smoothly. It subsequently proved impossible to collect pre-test papers from the experimental students; and one replacement experimental teacher was not interviewed. Surely a stable administrative environment, and an administrative commitment to facilitate the operation of the course (as did exist at Metropolitan), might have increased the course's success. Despite all these problems, however, the experimental students at South Central succeeded about as well as the control students. This certainly is gratifying, and suggests something about how carefully the COMP-LAB course has been structured. There seems every reason to think that the course can be successfully transferred, even where resources and administrative support are limited.

5.4 PRODUCTS OF THE PROJECT

The Directors' Final Report on the evaluation, which includes FERA's complete report, is available upon application. It contains a detailed discussion of the plan and findings of the evaluation.

Twelve reports about the project have been produced. An article by the Directors, "The COMP-LAB Project: An Experimental Basic Writing Course," appeared in the Spring/Summer 1979 issue of the Journal of Basic Writing. The Directors have made a total of 30 presentations about the project or aspects of it.

As of the writing of this report, over 100 visits and inquiries have been received. An information packet on the COMP-LAB (including the article from the Journal of Basic Writing) has been developed, and is used to answer inquiries. This information packet is contained in Appendix C.

The materials used by students in the COMP-LAB are being published in a workbook format as The COMP-LAB Exercises (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980). Although the exercises in this format do not have the additional advantages of the autotutorial laboratory setting, they will nevertheless make it possible for individual classroom teachers, and institutions which do not wish to adopt the entire integrated course, to benefit from the project.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

By all measures, this project has been successful. The course has been found to improve students' writing at least as well as traditional courses, despite a substantial reduction in classroom contact hours. The course has been institutionalized at York and the two transfer sites; at South Central, all sections of the course have been converted to the COMP-LAB model. More than 800 students have taken the model COMP-LAB course. Aspects of the course have been adopted at four additional colleges.

Interest in the course, in the autotutorial laboratory, and in the exercises themselves remains at a high level. Additional

colleges are already making plans to adopt the course, and we anticipate that others will also wish to do so, as the exercises gain a wider audience. The new funding from FIPSE, to adapt the COMP-LAB course to non-college settings, provides another opportunity for others to benefit from what has been learned.

As more nontraditional students with severe writing problems enter college, more colleges will be looking for writing programs which can meet these students' needs. It is therefore important that a tested, flexible, transferable, and potentially cost-effective program like the COMP-LAB basic writing course is available to such institutions (and the need is equally great outside college settings).

Furthermore, the project has resulted in more than the course. We have learned much during the project about instructional design, the value of an autotutorial instructional delivery system, evaluation management, and the evaluation of student writings at the basic writing level. We have already been called upon to share this knowledge, and plan (as we continue our research in these areas) to publish what we have learned. In this way, the COMP-LAB Project may have a continuing impact on postsecondary education.

Appendix A

SITES USING THE COMP-LAB COURSE

1. Sites Using the Complete Integrated Course

York College, CUNY
Jamaica, NY 11451
Laura Curtis
(212) 969-4077

Minneapolis Community College*
1501 Hennepin Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55403
Vicki Helwig
(612) 341-7061
*formerly Metropolitan Community College

South Central Community College
New Haven, CN 06511
Gerard Reichenberg
(203) 789-6927

2. Sites Using the Laboratory System

Lincoln University
Jefferson City, MO 65101
Donna Grout
(314) 751-2325

Malcolm-King College Extension
22 East 128 St.
New York, NY 10035
Carole Stevens
(212) 860-9700

3. Sites Using the COMP-LAB Exercises

College of New Rochelle, Harlem Hospital Extension
College of New Resources
115 Throop Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11206
Evelyn F. McKnight
(516) 678-5934

Polytechnic Institute of New York
333 Jay St.
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Barbara Quint Gray
(212) 643-5857

Appendix B

PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROJECT

York College

teachers of COMP-LAB sections
- Mary Epes
- Samuel Hux
- Carolyn Kirkpatrick
- Jane Loekle
- Georgianna Lord
- Leslie Oster
- Judith Papachristou
- Michael Southwell

teachers of control sections
- Joan Baum
- Elayne Feldstein
- Georgianna Lord
- Ruth Price
- Robert Ryley

lab supervisors
- Dorothy Parker
- Gerald Richman

administrator
- Alan Cooper

support services
- Ronald Ferina
- David Goetz
- Gerard McGough
- Edward Meehan
- William Warren

Metropolitan Community College

teachers of COMP-LAB sections
- Mary Barwise
- Shirley Borud
- Patricia Collins
- David Hanson
- Vicki Helwig

Ann Kimbrough

teacher of control sections
Erik Storlie

lab supervisors
Melissa Grande
Ann Kimbrough

administrators
Vicki Helwig
William Oatey

coordinators
David Hanson
Ann Kimbrough

South Central Community College

teachers of COMP-LAB sections
Norma Blacke-Bragg
Dieter Burow
John Flannelly
Marcus Oslander
Michael Szporer
Barry Yearwood

teachers of control sections
John Flannelly
Barry Yearwood

lab supervisor
Mary Burns

coordinator
Barbara Shollar

support services
Theresa Masnato

Evaluation

consultant
Charles R. Cooper

participant-observer
Ruth Price

consultants on design
Arthur Applebee
Catherine Keech
Lynn Morris

Ina Mullis
Ellen Nold

evaluation managers
John Meeker, FERA
Margaret A. Talburtt, FERA

Appendix C

COMP-LAB INFOMATION PACKET

The COMP-LAB Basic Writing Course

Department of English

York College, CUNY

- General Information on the COMP-LAB
- "The COMP-LAB Project: An Experimental Basic Writing Course"
- Sample Forms: Instruction Sheet
  Weekly Report
  Error-Marking Chart
- An Evaluation of the COMP-LAB Basic Writing Course

for information:

Mary Epes, Carolyn Kirkpatrick, Michael Southwell
Department of English
York College, CUNY
Jamaica, NY 11451
(212) 969-4077 or (212) 864-2080

The COMP-LAB Basic Writing Course was developed with support from The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education

The COMP-LAB
Department of English
rooms 207-209, Humanities North Bldg.
York College, CUNY
Jamaica, NY 11451

The COMP-LAB is the autotutorial writing laboratory at York College, CUNY. It provides support for sections of the COMP-LAB Basic Writing course, and for drop-in students (from freshmen to seniors) who need work on written correctness.

The COMP-LAB Basic Writing course (an innovative version of English 100 at York College) was developed with support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (DHEW), 1977-79. In the course, classroom work on rhetoric and syntax is systematically coordinated with a flexible schedule of work on correctness in the COMP-LAB. In the laboratory, students work on the COMP-LAB exercises, 18 modules of self-teaching exercises providing instruction and practice in those features of standard written English which cause the most serious writing problems. Because the exercises are self-teaching, students are truly able to work at their own speed, and the burden for learning is placed where it properly belongs, on the students themselves. The teacher is thus freed from the necessity of constant repetition of elementary grammatical material.

An evaluation of the course, supported by the Exxon Education Foundation, 1978-79, shows:

1. significant improvement in rates at which errors occur in the writing of students using the laboratory;
2. overwhelmingly favorable attitudes toward the laboratory;
3. for teachers, no difficulties in using the laboratory system;
4. increased flexibility in administering the remedial writing program; and
5. institutional cost-savings effected through a reduction in teacher contact time for students using the laboratory as part of a course.

The COMP-LAB Basic Writing course has been replicated (in whole or in part) at six colleges in Connecticut, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, and Ohio. With support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, new models of the COMP-LAB Basic Writing course are being developed for use in various non-collegiate settings: social service agencies, high schools, and industry.

On the reverse of this sheet will be found administrative information about the COMP-LAB.

October 1979

Modules in the COMP-LAB exercises:

basic modules:

Module 1: Writing Conventions
Module 2: Wrong Words
Module 3: Noun Plural Forms
Module 4: Verb Agreement
Module 5: The Verb BE
Module 6: Past-tense Verb Forms
Module 7: Sentence Construction
Module 8: Verb Phrases with HAVE
Module 9: Verb Phrases with BE
Module 10: Other Verb Phrases
Module 11: Sentence Combining
Module 12: More about Sentence Construction

supplementary modules:

Module 13: Noun Possessive Forms
Module 14: Pronoun Forms
Module 15: Pronoun Reference
Module 16: Adjective and Adverb Forms
Module 17: Adjective and Adverb Comparison
Module 18: Negative Words

The COMP-LAB Exercises are being published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., and should be available in February 1980.

Physical description:

two rooms, approximately 1,400 square feet
26 listening stations in carrels, with tape recorders
30 work stations at tables
five file cabinets for materials
open files for student work in progress
teacher mailboxes
miscellaneous furniture (desk, time clock, cabinets, etc.)

Personnel:

coordinator (member of the English Department)
laboratory supervisors (two, for 55 hours/week total)
student aides (four, for 60 hours/week total)

Students served (on average per semester):

150 students in English 100
50 drop-in students

Expenses:

for outfitting: approximately $16,000, for renovation (carpeting, painting, draperies, etc.) and equipping (tables, carrels, tape recorders, files, etc.)
for materials: covered by student fees
for personnel: approximately $27,500 annually (excluding coordinator)

For information:

Mary Epes/Carolyn Kirkpatrick/Michael Southwell
Department of English
York College, CUNY
Jamaica, NY 11451
(212) 969-4077 or (212) 864-2080

Mary Epes
Carolyn Kirkpatrick
and Michael G. Southwell

THE COMP-LAB PROJECT: AN EXPERIMENTAL BASIC WRITING COURSE

The COMP-LAB Project, now in its third year of operation at York College of The City University of New York, is an experimental program in basic writing. In the course, two classroom hours are systematically coordinated with a flexible schedule of work in an autotutorial writing laboratory, where students work on their own, not in a one-to-one relationship with a tutor. The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education has funded the development of the course, and the Exxon Education Foundation is underwriting its evaluation. At present the program has been adopted experimentally at two other sites, Metropolitan Community College in Minneapolis, and South Central Community College in New Haven.

We developed this program in response to a dual need, namely, to find (1) a *better* way to solve the most serious writing problems of nontraditional students at CUNY and elsewhere, and (2) a *cheaper* way to do that in face of shrinking budgets for remedial courses.

FOR WHOM THE PROGRAM IS DESIGNED

The population for which we developed the program is well-represented by Jerry Richards,[1] who wrote this paper on the first day of his English 100 class at York College:

Mary Epes, Carolyn Kirkpatrick, and Michael Southwell are Assistant Professors in the English Department at York College and co-directors of the COMP-LAB Project.

1. Although the author's name is not real, his paper is, and it is reproduced here exactly as he wrote it; nothing has been deleted, changed, or added, except the numbers preceding each group of words punctuated as a sentence.

reprinted from Journal of Basic Writing, 2, No. 2 (1979), 19-37

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[1]Poverty is a source of loneliness, sickness and even death, loneliness to mean a big suffering for children without freinds. [2]A child who want to go to the movies or to the circus but there parent's dosen't make enough money So he have to sit on the stairs of the house and people go by. [3]Because the park is 5 miles away loneliness is a little boy who mother and father work all day and start arguing at each other and not knowing that they have a child, or they feel sory for even having it.

[4]Sickness and death have a big effect on poverty childrens. [5]Some die because they don't got enough to eat they too many in the family to feed. [6]The clothing the children wear are not warm enough. [7]The poor housing the window are broke and radiator are not working. [8]Babies catch amonia and die little children starve so bad and start eating the chips off the wall. [9]The family don't get a examination every year. [10]Poverty in these to sources loneliness and sickness and death are have a very bad effect on children.

There are probably many instructors who would try to help Jerry by marking every error in this paper in red, with precise references to 2b, 6a(4), 9f, etc., in the *Harbrace College Handbook*. Let us hypothesize that Jerry has such an instructor, who returns the bloody paper to him at the next class meeting. So Jerry stares at it for a couple of minutes, smiles ruefully, mumbles, "I always was a terrible speller" (actually Jerry is quite a good speller), and stuffs it into his notebook. The likelihood that he will look at it again is remote.

Even though Jerry doesn't want to see his paper again, let's take another look at it. It may not be obvious that, for a basic writing student, Jerry has superior rhetorical skills. Below is an outline of the paper's rhetorical structure:

> Poverty is a source of loneliness, sickness, and even death [My topic is poverty and its psychological and physical effects on small children.] loneliness to mean a big suffering for children without freinds. [I begin by defining a major psychological effect, loneliness.] A child who want to go to the movies or to the circus but there parent's dosen't make enough money So he have to sit on the stairs of the house and people go by. Because the park is 5 miles away loneliness is a little boy who mother and father work all day and start arguing at each other and not knowing that they have a child, or they feel sory for even having it. [I give three examples of the loneliness caused by poverty.]
>
> Sickness and death have a very big effect on poverty childrens. [In my second paragraph I deal with the physical effects of poverty on small children; I begin with some obvious examples.] Some die because they don't got enough to eat they too many in the family to feed. The clothing the children wear are not warm enough. The poor housing the window are broke and radiator are not working. Babies catch amonia and die little children starve so bad and start eating the chips off the wall. The family don't get a examination every year. [Under the general heading of poor housing, I mention some particularly pathetic consequences of poverty for small children; I have saved the most affecting for the last. (*Note: The intrusion of yet one more obvious example somewhat spoils this effect.*)] Poverty in these to sources loneliness and sickness and death are have a very bad effect on children. [As a conclusion, I recapitulate my main idea.]

Inexperienced readers of the writing of nontraditional students are unlikely to notice these solid virtues of Jerry's paper. For, despite his fine sense of rhetorical structure, he has sinned against two common scribal conventions (writing *So* for *so* and *5* for *five*), misspelled three words, made twenty word-form errors, and, in six out of ten attempts, failed to produce a syntactically correct or complete sentence. Many of these problems would seem to be related to nonstandard speech habits.

Students with such severe writing problems have little chance of surviving in college, no matter how basically intelligent their papers may be. But in our experience, students like Jerry can finish the COMP-LAB course writing almost error-free papers. And other students with comparable word-form and syntactic problems, but less rhetorical sophistication, can also make big gains both in correctness and fluency. The evaluation now in progress is designed to assess the overall success of the program.[2]

THE LABORATORY COMPONENT

The Self-Instructional Method. Jerry's writing problems fall under three headings—word-form correctness, syntax, and rhetoric. In the latter, he happens to have a flying start, but of course most basic writing students do write much more disorganized or underdeveloped papers. And so all three needs must be addressed in a basic writing program. The genesis of the COMP-LAB program was in the intuition, which over the past three

2. We had thought of reproducing here one of Jerry's later papers. But any claims based on isolated examples are misleading, however gratifying they might be. Our purpose in this article is simply to describe what the COMP-LAB program is designed to do. Later we will report on what, as a matter of fact, it does do.

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years has grown into a conviction, that the first of these needs, word-form error, is best dealt with in a laboratory setting, where each student works by himself on self-instructional materials. (We'll discuss instruction in syntax and rhetoric later in this paper.)

At York College, English 100 has consisted of five instructional hours. In experimental sections using the COMP-LAB program, classroom hours have been reduced to two, and students go to the lab any time between 9 AM and 9 PM, Monday through Friday, to work on grammatical problems for as long as necessary to complete the weekly assignment; for most students, this is about four hours a week. A lab supervisor supplies materials and occasionally answers questions about content or procedure.

Each module, or weekly unit of work, focuses on a single grammatical feature. Students first listen to a brief audiocassette tape, and do accompanying practice exercises which deal with the elementary conceptual material of the module. Students then work their way through a series of written exercises of ever-increasing complexity. They themselves check each exercise against an answer sheet before they go on to the next.

Why is this self-instructional, self-paced learning method, employing audiotapes and written exercises, a better way to deal with students' word-form error than the traditional classroom approach? There are at least five reasons, related both to the kind of material being learned and the kind of student learning it. Conceptually, this grammatical material is easy; but for basic writing students, it is above all this "easy" material which they find enormously difficult to internalize and apply.

The five reasons for the success of this learning method with this material for these students are: (1) Students in college basic writing courses have encountered some of the course material as far back as the third grade. But some remember one thing, some another; some learn quickly, some slowly. When a grammar lesson is presented to a group, individual students are variously confused, bored, or even embarrassed. In the lab, students can replay a tape as often as necessary and spend as little or as much time on a written exercise as they wish. The lab thus provides a dignified and flexible environment for remedial instruction in grammar. (2) Many, if not most, of the biggest problems of basic writing students seem to be caused by their nonstandard speech habits. Audiotapes, coordinated with printed exercises, enable students to simultaneously *hear, see, pronounce,* and *write* grammatical forms. This process draws their attention to the grammatical forms required in

standard written English, and to the differences between what they may say and what they are expected to write. In the privacy of a carrel, students can profit from this experience without embarrassment. (3) While cognitive grasp of the rules is essential, students do not arrive at this understanding by listening to abstract formulations. In the classroom, the instructor must choose between presenting such formulations, or leading the class, step by step, to discovering a rule. Either way—even if the teacher resists the teacherly temptation to tell more than his students need to know—there is little chance for them to internalize the rule through practice. In the lab, only the most elementary formulations are presented initially, with an absolute minimum of technical language. Understanding comes partly through applying the rule over and over, manipulating forms in varied and increasingly difficult contexts. Understanding comes also through students' checking their own performance against answer sheets, thus learning to recognize both correct and incorrect forms. (4) Students working on their own can do much more work than could be assigned for homework. Even if a classroom instructor were to assign as large a quantity of homework as students can do in the lab, he probably could not mark all of it. Furthermore, students would lose the immediate feedback which comes from checking their own work. In the lab, students are constantly and instantly aware of what they have learned and what they have not yet learned. (5) In the classroom, especially if the material is technical, learning tends to be passive; the teacher is the fountainhead, students the receptacles, of wisdom. In the lab, students are active. They get a tiny piece of information and a concise instruction. Then immediately they must *do* something to prove they have understood. If they don't pay attention all the time, they quickly realize they are wasting their own precious time.

There is one additional reason why we feel our autotutorial laboratory method is good for nontraditional students: it develops their self-reliance in two important ways. (1) In a classroom, the teacher assumes most of the responsibility for students' learning. But in our lab, both the materials and the procedures place the responsibility for learning squarely on the students themselves. The COMP-LAB exercises are so constructed that students who do the modules with care can almost always do them successfully. And lab procedures are designed to bring home to students their own responsibility for this learning. In the lab, students punch in and out on a time clock. Lab attendance is not required, but every Monday, each student gets a weekly report: he spent

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so many hours in the lab, *it* says; he did or did not finish the assigned work; he did or did not score it accurately (it is spot-checked by the lab supervisors). These are facts: he knows them, and he knows his teacher knows them. There can be no evasion of responsibility. This weekly report documents students' efforts in the lab. Students are rightly gratified by this recognition, and are encouraged to keep up those efforts. It is particularly important for these nontraditional students to feel, for perhaps the first time, in control of their own learning. (2) And these students need to learn how to read, understand, and follow instructions by themselves. The COMP-LAB procedures and materials demand that students develop these basic skills quickly; at the same time, they foster the development of these skills, by providing a structure in which students are moved forward by such tiny incremental steps that virtually all of them can experience success.

The Laboratory Materials. Over the last three years, we have developed all the audiotape and written materials used in the lab. We have focussed each module on a separate and distinct grammatical feature, though the last exercises in any module always review previous learning. At this time, the modules are assigned in the following order:

Module 1: Scribal Conventions [very basic conventions about the arrangement of words on paper—indenting, capitalization, abbreviating, etc.]
Module 2: Wrong Words [common homonyms and word-class errors]
Module 3: Noun Plural Forms
Module 4: Verb Agreement [simple present-tense verbs, exclusive of BE]
Module 5: The verb BE [present and past tenses]
Module 6: Past-tense Verb Forms [the simple past tense]
Module 7: Sentence Construction [the sentence kernel, plus expansion]
Module 8: Verb Phrases with HAVE
Module 9: Verb Phrases with BE
Module 10: Other Verb Phrases [with DO and modals]
Module 11: Sentence Punctuation [avoiding fragments, comma splices, and run-ons]
Module 12: Pronouns
Module 13: Noun Possessives

Within each module, the majority of exercises ask students to use the feature in sentence and paragraph contexts. Only the first few exercises use the standard fill-in-the-blanks method, and then only as a check on

students' basic understanding of the rule. The students begin to use the feature in increasingly difficult contexts. They progress from writing words, to writing sentences, and finally to writing entire paragraphs. The final exercise in each module, the only one marked by the instructor, requires students to demonstrate their control over the feature in a paper of their own composing; the instructions are such that students cannot avoid using the feature they have been studying all week.

Each individual exercise demands just *one* thing; each moves students one exquisitely small step (so small that they can hardly fail to take it successfully) along their journey from mere cognitive grasp of the rule to its habitual application in their own writing. And each exercise is incremental; that is, it functions as the necessary bridge between the preceding and the following exercises.

The techniques employed in these exercises are drawn from a wide variety of sources: the most successful ESL techniques, like controlled composition and contrastive learning approaches; sentence combining; X-word grammar; and the discoveries of individual classroom teachers.[3] We have frequently adapted these methods to new purposes, perhaps not anticipated by their inventors. For example, we use sentence combining techniques to reinforce word-form correctness, not to develop stylistic variation. If students learn to write more gracefully and concisely, as well as more correctly, that is a bonus.

Most important of all, we have, in all our exercises, adapted successful classroom techniques to the autotutorial method, in which it is essential that students be able to check their own work. For example, we have refined the technique of controlled composition to the point where we can isolate a single feature or group of features for specific manipulations which yield one invariant response.

In working their way through the COMP-LAB exercises, students produce reams of transformed phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, all in service of word-form correctness and basic syntax. In this process, they are inevitably absorbing much about paragraph organization, development, and style. They may even be learning how to read.

3. We wish to acknowledge our debt to experimenters like Linda Flower, Sarah D'Eliso, Patricia Laurence, David Davidson, and many other CUNY teachers, and to Ruth Otte and William Jones of Rutgers University. We are particularly indebted to Carolyn Gilbert of Lehman College, CUNY, for sharing her linguistic insights with us.

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THE CLASSROOM COMPONENT

In spite of all we have said about the benefits of the autotutorial laboratory, we know that the classroom is equally important—or even more important. Every learner needs to know that there is some person who knows and cares about what he is learning, and who can tell him with a human voice that he is in fact learning it. Even though there is little need to mention grammar in the classroom, and we seldom do, the word-form exercises would probably be much less effective if the classroom did not exist.

In the lab, what students learn are essentially editing skills.[4] There they develop and sharpen these skills on materials we provide. But before students can apply their editing skills to their own writing, they must first learn to compose, to create their own materials; and, of course, this is best done under the guidance of a teacher in the classroom. The difficulty is convincing students that composing and editing are entirely different processes, so different, in fact, that they tend to derail each other when performed simultaneously. Learning them in two separate arenas helps students to understand this difference.

So does free writing. Free writing may be described as the writing students, or any writers, do for themselves. They may or may not wish to show it to someone, but their main motivation, at the time of writing, is simply to get ideas from their heads onto paper. They are not concerned about an audience or the form of what they write, but just about getting their thoughts down on the page. Free writing gives students confidence that they can do this, helps them enjoy the process of doing it, and develops their ability to do it quickly and spontaneously; in other words, it develops fluent writing, as distinct from correct writing.[5]

Free writing has an important part to play in a course like this one, with its heavy stress on correctness. It helps students learn that writing is not merely a means of communicating with others, but also an expressive vehicle for ideas and emotions which are in themselves significant to the writer. This is the kind of writing that students can care about; and when they care, they can begin to care about writing correctly.

4. Readers need to bear in mind that what for them may be mere proofreading is truly editing for the basic writing student.

5. For readers unfamiliar with free writing, we think the best two sources are Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), and Michael G. Southwell's "Free Writing in the Composition Class," *College English*, 38 (1977), 676-81.

When drafting ideas for papers, students are urged to free write at first and then edit later. We try to convince students that free writing can help them get good ideas on paper fast, even though these ideas may need a lot of reorganizing and editing. Hence, emphasis on free writing can help students distinguish between the composing and the editing processes.

The second emphasis in the classroom is, of course, elementary rhetoric: isolating main ideas, supporting and developing them. Instructors are free to use whatever methods work best for them with basic writing students, but should resist any temptation to teach more advanced rhetorical concepts, like inductive versus deductive techniques of argumentation. It should be noted, though, that instructors actually have more opportunity to focus students' attention on content, since the burden of explaining grammatical concepts has been removed to the lab.

The third element of the classroom curriculum is syntax. Our model for sentence analysis is based on the approach used in the CUNY-SUNY videotape and workbook series, *The English Modules:*[6] every sentence contains a sentence kernel—consisting of an unexpanded subject, an unexpanded verb, and perhaps a complement—plus expansion. Technical vocabulary is thus reduced to a minimum. With a thorough understanding of these few concepts, students are able to recognize and correct fragments, comma splices and run-ons, and confused sentences. Sentence exercises in the lab reinforce this classroom work. We discuss our use of this model of sentence analysis later, at the end of the section entitled "The Design of the Laboratory Materials."

COORDINATION OF CLASSROOM AND LABORATORY: PAPER-MAKING AND GRADING

The course works as a whole only because students understand the close coordination between the lab and the classroom. They see the two parts of the course, composing and editing, come together in their own writing, which is the only thing that counts ultimately anyway. Instructors tell students on day one, and remind them frequently during the course, that doing the lab work is only a means to an end: unless what they are learning improves their own writing sufficiently, they cannot pass.

6. Sarah D'Eloia, Barbara Gray, Mimi Shaughnessy, Shandor Sharadin, and Alice Trillin, *The English Modules* (New York: The State University of New York, 1978).

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Let us use Jerry Richards' paper as an example of how the paper-marking process integrates the work of the classroom and the work of the lab. This is Jerry's first formal paper. (He'll write ten over the semester.) When Jerry gets it back, the only errors marked on it will be spelling errors (*freinds, sory,* and *amonia*), as these are the only mistakes he can be expected, at this point, to know how to avoid. (Students are always permitted to use dictionaries.) In our system, errors like *there* for *their* and *to* for *two* are classified as wrong words, that is, words correctly spelled but misused in context. By the time Jerry writes Paper #3 he will have completed modules 1, 2, and 3. He will have learned about wrong words, about certain scribal conventions, and about noun plural forms. If he had submitted this paper as Paper #3, then, along with the spelling errors, these wrong words would be marked, as well as the scribal errors (like *5* for *five*), and noun plural errors (like *childrens* and *window*). A student as intelligent as Jerry, after doing the modules with care, might have eliminated these errors in the editing process before he handed in his paper. But if he did make them, he could understand every mistake marked on his paper. He would no longer feel helpless in the face of his own errors, but could correct them. And he is expected to correct them, by rewriting all sentences with errors and explaining each correction, using the rules he learned in the modules.

At all times students are keenly aware of the relationship between lab work and papers, and know that as soon as the deadline for completion of a module passes, they become responsible for editing their work for the feature covered. If a student is absent and falls behind in his lab work, an outcropping of errors marked on his next paper may spur him to catch up.

Students also understand that correctness is only a part of good writing. Their papers are marked not just for errors, but also for main ideas, development, clarity, and other points stressed in the classroom.

In our system, we distinguish between *marking* papers and *grading* them. Marking gives students feedback about their errors and the effectiveness of their writing. But they do not receive grades, which are an objective evaluation of their work against the standard of the course, until their last three papers. These are the grades on which the final grade in the course is based.

THE DESIGN OF THE LABORATORY MATERIALS

Without effective laboratory exercises dealing with students' actual problems, and dealing with them in the right order, this system could not work. Students must understand certain word forms before they can do anything useful about their syntactic problems. Accordingly, after a brief introduction to scribal conventions, we begin with noun and verb forms, and only then address syntax.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the pertinence of the laboratory exercises is to refer again to Jerry's paper. The number over each italicized word-form error corresponds to the module in which he will learn to correct it. Errors in spelling and syntax, dealt with in other ways, are not marked here in the interest of clarity. An X over a word indicates that the word-form error is not dealt with specifically in the modules, either because it is not common in the writing of students in this course, or because it is not enough to be taught to the whole group. These errors would be explained individually, or ignored.

basic

[1]Poverty is a source of loneliness, sickness and even death, loneliness to mean a big suffering for children without freinds. [2]A child who *wont* to go to the movies or to the circus but *there parent's dosen't* make enough money *5* he *have* to sit on the stairs of the house and people go by. [3]Because [X] park is *3* miles away loneliness is a little boy who mother and father work all day and start arguing at each other and not knowing that they have a child, or they feel sory for ever having it.

[4]Sickness and death have a very big effect on *poverty childrens*. [5]Some die because they don't *got* enough to eat *they* [6] too many in the family to feed. [7]The clothing the *childrens* wear *are* not warm enough. [8]The poor housing the *window* are *broke* and *radiator* are not working. [9]Babies catch amonia and die little children starve so *bad* and start eating the chips off the wall. [10]The family *don't got* a examination every year. [11]Poverty in these *10* sources loneliness and sickness and death are *have* a very bad effect on children.

Module 2, Wrong Words, will help Jerry to correct errors like *to* for *two*. This relatively easy module is, to the student, a credible introduction to the necessity for word-form correction.

Making nouns plural may seem superficially easier, but it is much more difficult for students to do. Jerry's uncertain control over this Module 3 feature points to some anomalies which are entirely characteristic of basic writing students: he writes some difficult plurals correctly—*movies, babies, people*—and yet drops the *-s* from *window* and *radiator;* in word-group 1 he writes *children*, in word-group 4 the hypercorrect form *childrens*, and then *children* again in word-group 6; and in word-group 2 he includes a gratuitous apostrophe—immediately before a word in which he uses the apostrophe correctly. Clearly, the

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grapholect has had a strong impact on Jerry's writing, but not strong enough to prevent dialect features from taking over when he is writing about down-home things (*window, radiator*), nor for him to distinguish consistently between correct and hypercorrect forms. What Jerry needs, and will get from Module 3, is not merely rules for pluralizing, which he plainly already knows, but a stronger sense of *noun-ness*. An exercise which asks him to rewrite sentences, by changing each noun from singular to plural, will help him to find nouns and learn to pluralize them correctly:

The man bought a guitar.[7]
The men bought guitars.

Or, in a paragraph:

A fashion design teacher recently sent her class to a local museum. In the portrait gallery one student saw a painting of a woman in an elaborate velvet dress and a hat as big as an umbrella. Another portrait showed a man wearing a huge white wig and a fancy ruffle from his neck to his waist. The student also found a picture of a baby dressed just like a little man, in a silk suit, a ruffled shirt, and a little white wig. The student decided that the overdressed man, woman, and child in that portrait gallery might be really interesting subject for her term paper.
Some fashion design teachers recently sent their classes to local museums. In the portrait galleries some. . .

Now that Jerry can identify a noun and its number, he is ready for the concept of the subject of a sentence. Module 4 teaches him how to make verbs in the simple present tense agree with their subjects. Although the specific focus of this module is on word forms, Jerry is also being introduced to syntax. Many of the exercises in this module require sentence manipulation; for example:

They drink wine with every meal.
She drinks wine with every meal.

7. All exercises or parts of exercises cited herein are Copyright © COMP-LAB 1978. Reprinted with permission. The COMP-LAB exercises will be published by Prentice-Hall in the fall of 1979.

Or:

Jesse and Butch rob banks.
Jesse robs banks.

Butch robs banks.

Or:

Lisa sings. She acts. She dances.
Lisa sings, acts, and dances.

Contrastive exercises help Jerry not to confuse new learning with old. For example, he may be asked to put a circle around noun plural endings and put a square around verb endings:[8]

New Yorkers in European countries always admire the wonderful subways there. When a New Yorker rides the London tube or the Paris Metro, the cleanliness of the trains startles him. He stops and stares at a maintenance man picking candy wrappers out of drains. With astonishment he watches a woman while she soaps down the tiled walls in the passageways, and polishes the brass railings in the stations. The comfort of the trains also seems strange. As he sinks into the cushioned seats, he thinks of the half-crushed straphangers back home. As he breathes the fresh air in the tunnels, he remembers the sweltering cars during New York summers. In the unfamiliar subways of Europe, with their excellent maps and directions, he never gets lost; but back home not even the conductor knows which train goes to Avenue S and which to Columbus Circle. Certainly, a New Yorker never gets homesick when he rides on European subways.

At this point Jerry probably needs some fence against incipient hypercorrection. Having learned not to write *he have to sit*, alas, like many basic writing students, he may begin to write *he has to sits*. So an exercise asks him to rewrite a paragraph in which all verbs appear in their

8. Patricia Laurence's exercises for students at The City College, CUNY, called our attention to the value of this kind of contrastive approach.

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base forms, in capital letters. (This convention is familiar to him from previous exercises.) He must distinguish between the verb forms which need the inflection, and those which don't:

Somebody MAKE plans to BREAK most world records as soon as someone else SET them. When an athelete RUN the mile in under four minutes, his rival immediately START training to BEAT his time. When a woman SWIM around Manhattan in the summer, another TRY to do it in the winter. It MAKE sense to TRY to BREAK records like these, but some other attempts SEEM ridiculous. We GRIEVE if someone DIE trying to FLY fast, but it LOOK silly for him to EAT or to DANCE himself to death. In contests like these, foolish people often REFUSE to STOP. If a person HAVE to KILL himself, he KILL himself. At that moment, he WANT to DO just one thing—to DANCE longer, or to EAT more, or to SCREAM louder than anyone else in the world.

Somebody makes plans to break most world records as soon as someone else sets them. An athlete runs the mile in. . .

Jerry's verb phrase errors are curious and wonderful: *the window are broke, sickness and death are have, they don't got,* and then, later, *the family don't get.* The latter variant forms (like Jerry's *childrens* and *children*) reflect the unsettling influence of either the standard forms or the grapholect, or both, on his own dialect, so that, at this stage of his growth as a writer, he is left without a consistent grammar to rely on. Jerry can begin to deal with this kind of problem only after he has single verb forms under control. But deal with it he must, for verb phrases, with their subtle and complex shades of meaning, are absolutely typical of the academic discourse which college students are learning to use. First, Jerry should work on the *forms* of verb phrases; an exercise which asks him to manipulate a sentence into different patterns starts him off:

William cooks manicotti every night.

NEGATIVE: *William doesn't cook manicotti every night.*

EMPHATIC: *William does cook manicotti every night.*

QUESTION: *Does William cook manicotti every night?*

A later exercise asks him to rewrite an entire paragraph in the negative, contracting each *not:*

Mickey has been a very satisfactory child. As an infant, he would eat his cereal. At two, he could feed himself. At four, he could tie his shoe laces. Now at six, Mickey is the star pupil in the first grade. He reads well and is very good at arithmetic. His teacher pastes gold stars on his papers. Furthermore, he can draw, he can sing, and he knows when to keep quiet. Mickey is a winner, and he even seems to know it. His parents are pleased with him. Mention his name. They will beam with pride.

Mickey hasn't been a very satisfactory child. As an infant, he wouldn't eat his cereal. At two, he couldn't feed. . .

Next, Jerry needs to understand the *meanings* residing in different kinds of verb phrases. And so he is asked to rewrite a short paragraph, changing tenses in accord with contextual clues:

WHAT DOES DUKE DO EVERY NIGHT?

Every night Duke makes dinner. As he tosses the salad, he drinks scotch. As he cooks the meat, he sips the cooking sherry. As he sets the table, he drinks half the wine.

WHAT DID DUKE DO LAST NIGHT?

Last night Duke made dinner. As he tossed the salad, he drank scotch.

As he cooked the meat,. . .

WHILE I WAS WATCHING TV LAST NIGHT, WHAT WAS DUKE DOING:

While I was watching TV last night, Duke was making dinner. As he was tossing the salad, he was drinking. . .

WHILE I'VE BEEN WATCHING TV, WHAT HAS DUKE BEEN DOING?

While I've been watching TV, Duke has been making dinner. As he has been tossing the salad, he has been. . .

Although syntax is primarily classroom work, certain important syntactic concepts are reinforced at strategic points throughout the lab

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exercises. Jerry's problem with adjective clauses,[9] for example, is typical (*A child who want to go to the movies or to the circus but. . .*). Jerry needs first to recognize adjective clauses as groups of words which expand nouns, and so an early exercise asks him simply to put parentheses around such groups of words, and draw arrows to the nouns they expand:

Players (who hesitate) miss their shots.

Next, when he has learned about verb agreement, Jerry needs to apply what he has learned both within and without the adjective clause. An exercise asks him to control verbs in the main clause:

HAVE The band (which plays for these dances) *has* either five or six members.

Another requires the same control inside the expansion:

LEAVE A teenager (who *leaves* home) often has financial problems.

Still later, mostly in the classroom, Jerry moves on to dealing directly with adjective clauses as a source of syntactic problems. He is led to understand that a noun plus an adjective clause does not constitute a sentence, but a fragment, and this is reinforced by lab exercises like this one, which asks him to identify this kind of expansion, and to label groups of words as sentences or fragments:[10]

[1]Animals have elaborate systems of movements and sounds (which resemble human communication.)	1. ..S.....
[2]Systems (which may or may not deserve the name language.) [3]Most animals certainly can communicate fear, pleasure, or sexual desire. [4]For example, the songs (which birds sing.) [5]Songs which have some of the qualities of human speech. [6]Each melody which we hear signals food, danger, or a sense of territory. [7]A man has studied the sounds which dolphins make. [8]Curious underwater vibrations which are like the pulses of navy sonar equipment. [9]This scientist considers these sounds the equivalent of human speech. [10]And the complicated dance which bees perform. [11]These intricate movements tell other bees about sources of nectar. [12]Scientists who study animal communication are trying to find out if animals can learn actual human language. [13]A woman who has devised a signal system which resembles the finger talk of deaf mutes. [14]She taught it to a chimpanzee that now has a vocabulary of over 100 words. [15]But no animal has used sounds or signals which are exactly like human language. [16]Sounds which can express general and original ideas.	2. ..F..... 3. ..S..... 4. ..F..... 5. ..... 6. ..... 6. ..... 7. ..... 8. ..... 9. ..... 10. ..... 11. ..... 12. ..... 13. ..... 14. ..... 15. ..... 16. .....

The sequential and incremental quality of the COMP-LAB exercises is impossible to demonstrate in the space available to us here. But these few examples may serve to suggest the general principles underlying them all: isolating particular problems or pieces of information; crafty sequencing; and reinforcement of previous learning. We have borrowed techniques freely and widely. But our refinement of these techniques, combining and sequencing them, adapting them to the autotutorial method, and using them for new purposes, is, so far as we know, our own.

COST-SAVINGS

We hope to establish that the COMP-LAB course, with two hours of classroom instruction plus relatively inexpensive supervised lab work, can save instructional dollars for our college and others which may choose to adopt it. The amount of such savings depends, of course, on the number of classroom hours now devoted to basic writing, current

9. It should be remembered that technical vocabulary is kept to a minimum; the words "adjective clause" would never be used with a student.

10. It's important to recognize the limits of the lab approach: lab exercises can help Jerry learn how to correct syntactic problems like these, by providing practice in using this model for sentence analysis. But he must apply it to *his own* sentences, and he can do this only with the help of a teacher.

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staffing patterns, and a variety of other factors. More important, though less obvious, are possible indirect institutional savings: the course provides considerable administrative and staffing flexibility, and it may produce higher student retention and pass rates.

CONCLUSION

The Exxon Education Foundation is supporting a thorough evaluation of the COMP-LAB Project by a team of outside evaluators. Students' writings will be measured holistically for overall quality and rates of errors will be counted. A conventional comparison-group experimental design has been set up, by means of which it will be possible to compare the performance of students in COMP-LAB sections with that of students in control sections at York and at the other two schools where this course has been adopted experimentally. In addition, students' and teachers' attitudes toward the experimental course, changes in students' attitudes toward writing, the adequacy of the transfer procedures, grade and retention data, and the cost of the course, will be measured. This evaluation is at least partially exploratory, since very little work has been done on the assessment of entire writing programs. Nevertheless, we do hope to be able to reach some reliable conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of the COMP-LAB program.

In particular, we hope to show that a semester of intensive work on grammatical correctness need not harm, but rather can foster, students' rhetorical development. This is why students' writings will be evaluated by a holistic reading as well as by an error count. The notion that teaching standard written English to speakers of nonstandard dialects is harmful, both psychologically and educationally, has not died with the sixties. But we believe that our head-on assault on error has the opposite effect, a liberating one, on students who fear to put pen to paper, knowing that the *way* they write, regardless of *what* they write, exposes them to instant if unspoken derision.

And in some quarters, it *is* being spoken—loudly. Last winter, under the headline "Illiterates in the thousands passing through City College," a *New York Post* reporter contrasted two types of students, the "illiterates" and the "bright" students, and he cited the following passage from a student's history paper to show how the "illiterates" differ from the "bright" students:

> At first feudalism may have worked to the Kings advantages but as generations passed the new lourds or vassales must have new new reason to obey a king they possable never saw. When the Duck of Normandy (William) in 1066 took England the King of France not only had a powerful lord breathing down his neck but now a country to deal with.
>
> The French King dealt with it by not dealing with it. They just sat and took the crumbs from the Ducks. Then came a man named Phillip II. He did something. He attacked. Crushed all riststance in the north and drove his Normans vassal and now King of England into the sea.[11]

Illiterate the writer of this paper may be; but he is obviously neither stupid nor uninformed: he gives a clear and convincing example of the breakdown of feudalism in France in the eleventh century.

This confounding of illiteracy with stupidity by the so-called educated public will not go away today or tomorrow or, perhaps, ever. The Conference on College Composition and Communication may advocate students' "right to their own language," but it's necessary to define the difference between spoken and written language. No one has the "right" to be scorned because he can't write in standard English, the medium through which our culture transmits so much of value to all. In the COMP-LAB program, we hope to demonstrate that at least the basics of this skill may be acquired by many students in one semester, and within current budgetary restrictions on remedial education.[12]

11. *New York Post*, 20 February 1978, p. 5.

12. The influence of Miss Shaughnessy has been everywhere present in these pages. For all we have learned from her and for her interest in our work, we are grateful.

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The COMP-LAB Exercises

Module 4
Verb Agreement

Instruction Sheet

NAME_____ DATE BEGUN_____

INSTRUCTOR/SECTION_____

Put an X in the box next to each step as you complete it.

☐ 1. Listen to the tape for COMP-LAB Module 4, Verb Agreement. As you listen to the tape, do exercises 4.1 through 4.16 in the RULES section of Module 4.

☐ 2. Show your completed exercises in the RULES section to the lab supervisor. . . . . LS's initials:_____

☐ 3. Go on to the EXERCISE section of Module 4, and do exercise 4.17.

☐ 4. Check exercise 4.17. . . . . NUMBER OF MISTAKES_____

- ☐ a. If you made more than one mistake, review the RULES, and do exercise 4.17.A.
- ☐ b. Check exercise 4.17.A. . . . . NUMBER OF MISTAKES_____

☐ 5. Do exercise 4.18.

☐ 6. Check exercise 4.18. . . . . NUMBER OF MISTAKES_____

- ☐ a. If you made more than one mistake, review the RULES, and do exercise 4.18.A.
- ☐ b. Check exercise 4.18.A. . . . . NUMBER OF MISTAKES_____

☐ 7. Do exercise 4.19.

☐ 8. Check exercise 4.19. . . . . NUMBER OF MISTAKES_____

☐ 9. Do exercise 4.20.

☐ 10. Check exercise 4.20. . . . . NUMBER OF MISTAKES_____

☐ 11. Do exercise 4.21.

☐ 12. Check exercise 4.21. . . . . NUMBER OF MISTAKES_____

☐ 13. Do exercise 4.22.

☐ 14. Check exercise 4.22. . . . . NUMBER OF MISTAKES_____

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COMP-LAB
Department of English

WEEKLY REPORT

NAME_____

INSTRUCTOR/SECTION_____

WEEK ENDING_____

LAB SUPERVISOR

sessions/hours in COMP-LAB_____

module assigned this week_____
unfinished_____
finished_____
Your scoring was: careful_____ not careful enough_____

module finished late_____
Your scoring was: careful_____ not careful enough_____

pages of free writing completed_____

==========

TEACHER

times absent this week_____

module_____WRITING TEST
excellent_____
pass_____
fail_____
Do this additional work:_____

additional work overdue:_____

paper corrections overdue or incomplete
paper(s) #_____

comments:

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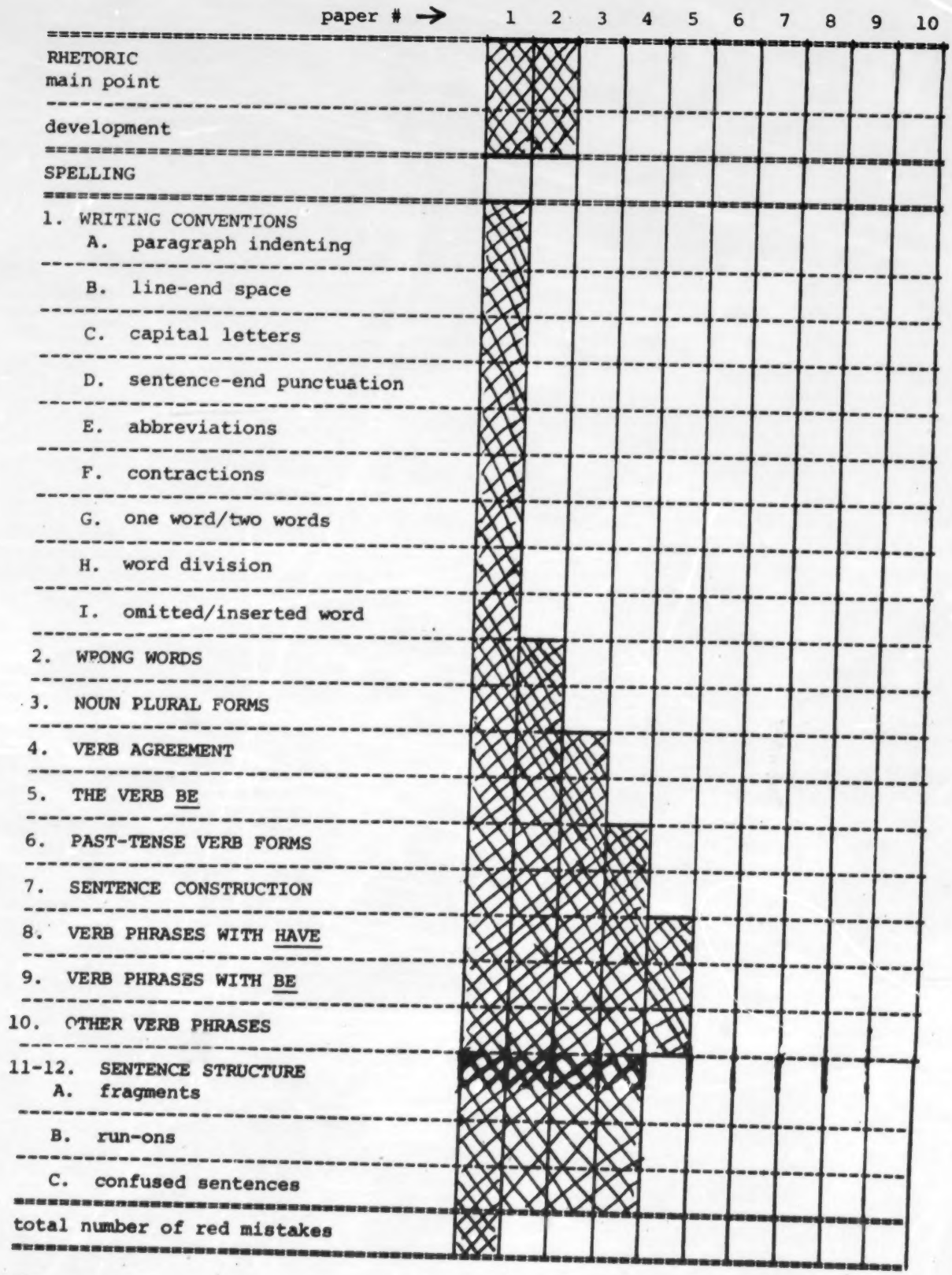
Department of English

Error Marking Chart

NAME _____



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An Evaluation of the COMP-LAB Basic Writing Course

Preliminary Findings

With support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, Professors Mary Epes, Carolyn Kirkpatrick, and Michael Southwell established an experimental model of an innovative basic writing course at York College, CUNY, in New York, in Fall 1977. In the model course, classroom work on rhetoric and syntax is systematically coordinated with a flexible schedule of work on correctness in an autotutorial writing laboratory (known as the COMP-LAB). The model course was transferred to Metropolitan Community College (in Minneapolis) and South Central Community College (in New Haven) in Fall 1978. During this semester, the course was evaluated at all three sites, with support from the Exxon Education Foundation.

Students in experimental sections were compared to those in control sections, in an attempt to determine whether experimental students were at any disadvantage, in view of the fact that their teacher contact time had been reduced by up to 60%. On the basis of student questionnaires, interviews with students, teachers, and administrators, and analysis of writing samples, it seems possible to conclude that experimental students can perform at least as well as (and perhaps better than) traditionally-taught control students, and that the experimental course can be transferred effectively to other settings.

Attitudes

students

There were no significant differences between experimental and control students in attitudes toward their courses.

For experimental students, there were highly favorable attitudes toward the laboratory practice.

teachers

There were no significant differences between experimental and control teachers in attitudes and expressed interest in their courses.

For experimental teachers at the two transfer sites, there were no particular difficulties in using the course.

Writings

holistic scores

There were no significant differences between experimental and control students for either mean pre-test or mean post-test scores.

For experimental students, there was noticeably greater improvement over the semester than for control students. *

error rates

There were no significant differences between experimental and control students for pre-test papers.

For experimental students, there was significant improvement over the semester; for control students, there was no significant improvement over the semester.

Administration

Reduced classroom hours for the experimental course provided important administrative and scheduling flexibility. They also generated sufficient instructional savings to support the major expenses of the laboratory. *

There were no particular difficulties in transferring the experimental course, or in training new teachers.

Demographic Data

There were no significant differences between experimental and control students in pass rates (despite the 60% reduction in teacher contact time for experimental students).

There were no significant correlations between various demographic factors and success in the course.

*tentative findings; statistical significance unknown